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STATE FOR EAP/BSC AND PM--JEFF BURNETT
DEFENSE FOR OSD--KRISTI HUNT

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SUBJECT: CHILE PARTICIPATION IN DEFENSE MINISTERIAL OF THE
AMERICAS

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¶1. (U) Poloff met with Ambassador Boris Yopo, Chief of the International Affairs Division of the Ministry of Defense, and Maria Ines Ruz, on August 8 to discuss reftel request on Chile's participation in the Defense Ministerial of the Americas.

¶2. (SBU) Chile wants the ministerial to focus on broad regional themes without being sidetracked by bilateral issues or revisiting issues already discussed in past fora. Ruz said that in recent weeks Chile had feared that the conflict between Colombia and Ecuador would dominate the ministerial, and they are relieved that this issue has been resolved. In general terms, Chile is interested in maintaining the ministerial as an open space for dialogue across the hemisphere and wants to avoid rehashing issues that have already been discussed at previous meetings. (Note: Ruz and Yopo did not specify which issue they feared other countries might try to re-open for discussion. End Note.) Chile is interested in maintaining the Williamsburg agenda and using the upcoming ministerial to further strengthen civilian control of the military in Latin America.

¶3. (U) In terms of specific topics of interest, Ruz said that Chile hoped to discuss three topics:
--Military participation in disaster preparation
--Military participation in peacekeeping operations generally and specifically the MINUSTAH operation in Haiti
--Military participation and regional cooperation in preparation for major political events/meetings, particularly in the Caribbean

¶4. (U) On August 12, Ruz informed Poloff that the Chilean delegation will include: Defense Minister Jose Goni; Undersecretary of War Gonzalo Garcia; Chief of the General Staff of National Defense Gen. Ivan Fabry; and Ministry of Defense International Affairs Advisor Maria Ines Ruz. (Note: In a separate meeting August 11 with DATT, an advisor to U/S Garcia expressed doubt that Garcia would attend. Post is unsure if this hesitation is related to a recent Bachelet request for all Ministers to rein in travel spending. End Note.)

¶5. (U) Ruz noted that Chile would be open to bilateral meetings with the U.S. or other countries. Chile also hopes to continue discussions about a planned November 2008 seminar on defense modernization. Ruz noted that at a June 27 meeting in Santiago, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies Director Richard Downie mentioned that the DMA would be a good opportunity for the U.S. and Chile to continue their discussions about preparations for this seminar. Chile is interested in continuing this conversation in Banff. Claudio Ortiz, Advisor to Defense Minister Goni, is the Chilean point of contact for this request and can be reached at

cortiz@defensa.cl.

¶6. (U) Speaking in general terms about US-Chile relations, Yopo and Ruz noted that defense relations between the two countries have grown closer since 2005, owing in particular to regular Defense Consultative Commission (DCC) meetings. They noted that one theme that Chile hopes to explore in its ongoing defense dialogue with the U.S. is ways to improve Chile's defense cooperation with other Latin American countries.

SIMONS